

From Mobile Center to Constantinople

The Birth of Byzantine Imperial Government

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For centuries the Byzantine government was based at a single capital and imperial rule was mostly sedentary, whereas the Roman government had been partly sedentary and partly mobile. The permanence of government depended on the emperor's agenda and whether internal or external threats forced them to sites of conflict. Despite various forms of delegated public authority, Roman emperors continued to be the source of all administrative, legal, fiscal, and military decisions. Wherever the emperor was, there was the state also; power and influence always followed the monarch. Roman centralization was less related to a specific location, which might be called a capital, than to the ruler himself. Thus the history of Roman government is mirrored in the history of imperial journeys. This fact has been highlighted by several scholars, such as Fergus Millar, Helmut Halfmann, Timothy Barnes, John Wilkes, and, more recently, François Chausson, who investigated the history of Roman government on the move.¹ But one should not excessively emphasize

the political contrast between the Roman period (first to fifth century) and the early Byzantine era (from the fifth century onwards) and assume that Byzantine bureaucracy and immobility succeeded Roman efficiency and mobility. A Byzantine emperor had neither more nor less power than a Roman emperor. Besides, the process of imperial settling down actually occurred during late antiquity, more precisely from the late fourth to the mid-fifth century.² This paper extends previous scholarship by focusing on the Theodosian and Justinianic codes of law that were promulgated in 438 and 529–34 respectively. Both legal compilations provide a remarkable and reliable contemporary record of the precise locations of emperors when they issued laws. They also provide a detailed study of the numerous laws enacted from Constantine to Theodosius II, who died in 450, and reveal that emperors came to be settled in Constantinople from the time of Theodosius I (379–395). The relationship between legal production and a fixed government located on the Bosphorus appears incidental in the important chronology of laws and events established one century ago by Otto Seeck.³ But this

1 F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 BC–337 AD)*, 2nd ed. (London, 1992; repr. 2001); H. Halfmann, *Itinera Principum: Geschichte und Typologie der Kaiserreisen im Römischen Reich* (Stuttgart, 1986); T. D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1982); idem, "Emperors on the Move," *JRA* 2 (1989): 247–61; J. Wilkes, "Imperial Movements, AD 193–337," in *CAH* vol. 12, *The Crisis of Empire, AD 193–337*, ed. A. K. Bowman, P. Garnsey, and A. Cameron, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2008), 714–23; F. Chausson, "La fausse immobilité du Prince: Remarques préliminaires sur la présence du Prince à Rome et dans ses environs,"

in *Les voyages des empereurs dans l'Orient romain: Époques antonine et sévérienne*, ed. A. Hostein and S. Lalanne (Arles, 2012), 17–35.

2 S. Destephen, *Le voyage impérial dans l'Antiquité tardive: Des Balkans au Proche-Orient* (Paris, 2016).

3 O. Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 n. Chr. Vorarbeit zu einer Prosopographie der christlichen Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart, 1919; repr. Munich, 1984).

relationship has never been studied in detail, although the relative Theodosian stability was crucial to the development of Byzantine administration. Even if we are dealing with a trend toward institutional permanence, I do not propose a linear evolution from mobility to immobility. Obviously the bigger the city grew the more attractive it became. The rise of Constantinople reduced the spatial and political dimensions of imperial journeys, but the city's promotion to capital status was also a result of the gradual immobility of the late Roman emperors.⁴ The process of centralization in late antiquity is related to the expansion of Constantinople. But it is worth noting that imperial journeys allowed for the promotion of Constantinople, and the city's capitalization did not hamper the emperors' movements until the mid-fifth century. Byzantine government was born only when emperors were first stationed in Constantinople.

I. Moving and Concentrating Authority

The foundation and consecration of Constantinople in 324 and 330, even though the city was still under construction, gradually modified its founder's movements, which became more and more concentric. While the city was unfinished, Constantine's travels began to be limited to the eastern half of his dominion. Between the foundation of Constantinople on 8 November 324 and Constantine's death on 22 May 337, the ruler probably did not spend more than fifteen months in the western part of his Empire. Most of his journeys were concentrated in the Balkans and Asia Minor, specifically from Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica in Serbia) to Nicomedia (Izmit in Turkey), two residential cities bequeathed by the Tetrarchy to Constantine.⁵ From

330 onwards the geographical scope of the emperor's trips was further confined to the lower Danube and the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits.⁶ At first sight, the progressive reduction of Constantine's mobility can be attributed to his old age, but the relatively high number of Roman emperors who died on the march during earlier periods proves that health was regarded as secondary to political concerns, particularly military obligations.

The reorientation of Constantine's travels represented a reorganization of authority less in favor of Constantinople than of the emperor's male kin. We must resist the temptation to consider the city founded by Constantine as an instant capital and seat of a single and permanent imperial authority.⁷ Indeed, the emperor dwelt in his city only during winter. In other seasons he dedicated himself to travel throughout the southeastern part of the Balkan Peninsula and the northwestern part of Asia Minor, more precisely the province of Bithynia, except in 335, when he stayed mostly in Constantinople. Constantine's repeated stays in the city did not disclose any intention to promote a new capital, but rather expressed the need for a rear base for fresh troops and supplies, and perhaps also for regaining strength and awaiting better weather conditions. Moreover Constantine was not the sole ruler, even though he exerted authority over his colleagues and heirs. From the 330s onwards, his three sons, Constantine the Younger, Constantius, and Constans, and his nephew Dalmatius were distributed among the major centers of power in the Roman Empire—certainly Trier and Antioch, perhaps Milan

4 For a more holistic approach, see the magnum opus, unfortunately not translated into English, of G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1984). See also my recent paper: "La naissance de Constantinople et la fin des voyages impériaux (IV^e–V^e siècle)," *AntTard* (2016): 157–69.

5 On Sirmium, see S. Soproni, ed., *Tabula imperii romani: Aquincum, Sarmizegetusa, Sirmium auf dem Grunde der Weltkarte 1:1 000 000 L 34 Budapest* (Budapest, 1968), 103; M. Jeremić, "The Relationship between the Urban Physical Structures of Medieval Mitrovica and Roman Sirmium," *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 12 (2006): 137–61; I. Popović, "Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica) – Residenzstadt der römischen Kaiser und Stätte der frühen Christen," in *Roms Erbe auf dem Balkan: Spätantike Kaiservillen und Stadtanlagen in Serbien*, ed.

U. Brandl and M. Vasić (Mainz, 2007), 17–32; M. Werner, *Sirmium: Imperial Palace Complex* (Sremska Mitrovica, 2010). On Nicomedia: P. Boulhol, "L'apport de l'hagiographie à la connaissance de la Nicomédie paléochrétienne (toponymie et monuments)," *MÉFRA* 106 (1994): 921–92; C. Foss, "Nicomedia and Constantinople," in *Constantinople and Its Hinterland: Papers from the Twenty-Seventh Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Oxford, April 1993*, ed. C. Mango and G. Dagron (Aldershot, 1995), 181–90.

6 For the chronology and geography of Constantine's travels during his last years, see Seeck, *Regesten*, 180–84; Barnes, *The New Empire*, 78–80; Wilkes, "Imperial Movements," 722–23.

7 Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale*, 13–47; E. La Rocca, "La fondazione di Costantinopoli," in *Costantino il Grande dall'antichità all'umanesimo*, ed. G. Bonamente and F. Fusco (Macerata, 1993), 2:553–83; B. Ward-Perkins, "Constantinople, Imperial Capital of the Fifth and Sixth Centuries," in *Sedes regiae (ann. 400–800)*, ed. G. Ripoll and J. M. Gurt (Barcelona, 2000), 63–81.

and Sirmium. In this way the Tetrarchic residential cities, possibly with the exception of Thessalonica, were occupied and inhabited by the emperor's representatives (who were also his relatives).⁸ Therefore the Roman state possessed several command centers where supreme authority was exerted in the name of the same emperor.

Dynastic appropriation of public power did not cause any territorial fragmentation, but rather strengthened the decision-making hierarchy. Henceforth the emperor was not required to visit countless provinces and defend frequently assailed strategic frontiers, as close relatives provided surveillance and security. But it would be inaccurate to describe this government as decentralized, since all the princes were subordinate to Constantine, who remained the only source of political legitimacy and whose measures, once legally formalized, were implemented across the empire. Indeed, members of his family did not actually enact any laws.⁹ The Constantinian empire only appeared to be polycentric and the geographical reduction of imperial mobility was only temporary. The same individual held the reins of power and exerted enough authority to enforce his decisions everywhere as well as focus his personal interventions on a limited part of the Empire. In this way, the shortening of official journeys strengthened rather than weakened imperial authority. By arranging travel around a single, but occasional residence, Constantine imitated the Tetrarchs' systemic mobility and did not

grant political supremacy to Constantinople over the other imperial dwellings.¹⁰

It might appear that the Roman Empire was partitioned just after Constantine's death in 337, but once again kinship adds nuance to this interpretation and reveals that it was in fact a territorial distribution of administrative and military authority among brothers, not a political division. In the eastern part of the empire, under the rule of Constantius II (337–361), Constantine's second son took control of more imperial residences than his brothers: Sirmium, Thessalonica, Constantinople, Nicomedia, and Antioch were all subject to his authority. These large cities capable of accommodating the emperor and his retinue relegated Constantinople to the role of a temporary halting place. Constantius II regularly stayed in Syria and Mesopotamia, rarely stayed in the Balkan Peninsula, and only occasionally stayed in the West after his brothers' deaths and assumption of their possessions in 350.¹¹ Although always on the move and far from Constantinople, the emperor was primarily responsible for the political promotion of his father's foundation. As he granted to Constantinople privileges and institutions similar to those of Rome, Constantius II allowed the city to become a new capital at the expense of other imperial residences in the east. This political centralization was clearly original, for it was not based upon the ruler's settling down, not even on his regular presence in the city. He tried to reconcile institutional concentration and political mobility and took care that one did not preclude the other. Even though distant and absent, the emperor took measures and made donations in favor of Constantinople. Henceforth the city possessed a large array of institutions (a

8 On late antique palatial architecture and complexes, see N. Duval, "Existe-t-il une 'structure palatiale' propre à l'Antiquité tardive?," in *Le système palatial en Orient, en Grèce et à Rome: Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 19–22 juin 1985*, ed. E. Lévy (Leiden, 1987), 463–90; idem, "Les résidences impériales: Leur rapport avec les problèmes de légitimité, les partages de l'empire et la chronologie des combinaisons dynastiques," in *Usurpationen in der Spätantike*, ed. F. Paschoud and J. Szidat (Stuttgart, 1997), 127–53; S. Ćurčić, "Late-Antique Palaces: The Meaning of the Urban Context," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 67–90; E. Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist: Untersuchungen zu den Staatsdenkmälern des dezentralisierten Reiches von Diocletian bis zu Theodosius II* (Mainz, 2002), 39–47; I. Baldini, "Palatia, praetoria ed episcopalia: Alcune osservazioni," in *La villa restaurata e i nuovi studi sull'edilizia residenziale tardoantica*, ed. C. Sfameni and P. Pensabene (Bari, 2014), 163–70.

9 The same political and legal situation occurred under the rule of Constantius II. See R. C. Blockley, "Constantius Gallus and Julian as Caesars of Constantius II," *Latomus* 31 (1972): 433–68; B. Bleckmann, "Constantina, Vetrano und Gallus Caesar," *Chiron* 24 (1994): 29–68; P. Barceló, "Caesar Gallus und Constantius II: Ein gesichertes Experiment?," *Acta Classica* 42 (1999): 23–34.

10 On tetrarchs' mobility, see Barnes, *The New Empire*, 49–67; idem, "Emperors, Panegyrics, Prefects, Provinces and Palaces," *JRA* 9 (1996): 532–52; Wilkes, "Imperial Movements," 719–22; C. Zuckerman, "Les campagnes des tétrarques, 296–298: Notes de chronologie," *AntTard* 2 (1994): 65–70. For a legal perspective, see S. Corcoran, *The Empire of the Tetrarchs: Imperial Pronouncements and Government, AD 284–324*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2000).

11 Concerning the geography and chronology of Constantius II's trips, see Seeck, *Regesten*, 184–208; Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale*, 79–81; T. D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1993), 218–28. Useful supplements and details are provided by P. O. Cuneo, *La legislazione di Costantino II, Costanzo II e Costante (337–361)*, *Materiali per una palinogenesi delle costituzioni tardo-imperiali*, serie seconda 2 (Milan, 1997).

senate, an urban prefect) and public buildings, both secular (libraries, baths, granaries) and religious (the Basilica of the Holy Apostles and Hagia Sophia), which enabled the city to compete with the political precedence and monumental adornment of Rome.¹² As Constantius II initiated a process of centralizing but not of settling down, we can assume that it was the first step in separating the central administration from the emperor on the move: they could pursue a concerted policy without the need to be in the same place at the same time.

The reigns of Julian (361–363) and Jovian (363–364) were too short to determine their possible influence upon the capitalization of Constantinople launched by Constantius II.¹³ Based on their political activity and geographical mobility, both emperors seem to have regarded the city of Constantine more as a place of legitimacy than of actual power. They felt compelled to take control of the city to legitimize their rule, but they never exerted authority from the place itself. During his rebellion against Constantius II, Julian rushed into Constantinople as soon as he learned that his cousin, lying on his deathbed, had designated him sole and legitimate heir. Likewise Jovian hastily concluded a humiliating peace with the Persians after Julian's death. Rather than waiting for the end of the winter season, he headed straight to Constantinople, but died suddenly only a few days from the city at Dadastana, between Ancyra and Nicaea.¹⁴ Both emperors

wanted to control Constantinople, but neither of them wanted to stay there. The foundation of Constantine was a political magnet, symbolic center, and space of legitimacy, but the city was not powerful enough to reduce imperial mobility or restrain the scope of political action.

In this sense, the reign of Valens (364–378) continued the policy of distant centralization inaugurated by Constantius II. The emperor only occasionally dwelt in Constantinople, and even then not because the city represented the political center of his possessions, but simply because it was an obligatory stopping point between the Balkan Peninsula and the Levant. The residences most frequented by Valens were in the main theaters of military operations: Marcianopolis in the Balkans (modern Devnya in Bulgaria), Antioch, and Hierapolis (modern Manbij) in Mesopotamia. Valens traveled to Constantinople only half a dozen times in fourteen years, mostly in winter and in transit between the western and eastern edges of his possessions.¹⁵ Authoritarian and Arian, Valens was caricatured by hostile ecclesiastical sources as a heretic tyrant. Albeit autocratic as any Roman emperor before or after him, Valens could not stay in the same place for long. He was always on the move, and his personal power needed to be relentlessly reaffirmed by frequent journeys and regular stopovers to establish direct relations with local populations. Although the emperor completely embodied supreme power, he felt a political and personal necessity to promote Constantinople to a position of power and prestige. Valens completed

12 The creation and promotion of the senate of Constantinople has aroused considerable interest. See Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale*, 124–33 and 226–30; P. Heather, “New Men for New Constantines? Creating an Imperial Elite in the Eastern Mediterranean,” in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries*, ed. P. Magdalino (Aldershot, 1994), 11–33, esp. 12–13; L. Cracco Ruggini, “Il Senato fra due crisi (III–VI secolo),” in *Il Senato nella storia*, vol. 1, *Il Senato nell'età romana*, ed. E. Gabba (Rome, 1997), 223–375, esp. 285–89; A. Skinner, “The Early Development of the Senate of Constantinople,” *BMGS* 32 (2008): 128–48, esp. 134–38. On imperial benefaction towards the city, an overview is provided by N. Henck, “Constantius ὁ Φιλοκτίστης?,” *DOP* 55 (2001): 279–304.

13 Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale*, 54–64; C. Mango, *Le développement urbain de Constantinople (IV^e–VII^e siècles)* (Paris, 1985; repr. 1990), 37; S. Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople* (Cambridge, 2004), 1.

14 See J. den Boeft, J. W. Drijvers, D. den Hengst, and H. C. Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XXV* (Leiden, 2005), 333–35; and F. Paschoud, “On a Recent Book by Alan Cameron: *The Last Pagans of Rome*,” *AntTard* 20 (2012): 359–88, esp. 378–80. Regarding Julian's elusive successor, a reassessment

has been provided by G. Wirth, “Jovian: Kaiser und Karikatur,” in *Vivarium: Festschrift Theodor Klauser zum 90. Geburtstag*, ed. E. Dassmann and K. Thraede (Münster, 1984), 353–84.

15 On chronology and geography of Valens's travels, see Seeck, *Regesten*, 217–51; Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale*, 82–83; F. Pergami, *La legislazione di Valentiniano e Valente 364–375*, *Materiali per una palinogenesi delle costituzioni tardo-imperiali*, serie seconda 4 (Milan, 1993), *passim*, with several corrections and precisions proposed by S. Schmidt-Hofner, “Die Regesten der Kaiser Valentinian und Valens in den Jahren 364 bis 375 n. Chr.,” *ZRG* 125 (2008): 498–602. Among the significant Eastern Roman emperors, Valens is the only one whose reign is completely included within the *Res gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus. On the basis of legal and narrative sources, Valens's travels have been briefly reconstituted by T. D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1998), 247–54; and with greater details by N. Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century AD* (Berkeley, 2002).

Constantius II's policy of distanced centralization. Even though he was frequently away, he made several temporary stops in Constantinople. He tried to compensate for his absences by manifold acts of generosity, which encouraged the institutional, demographic, and religious development of the city through the building of a court, an aqueduct, granaries, and a basilica. Valens amplified and magnified the urban and architectural adornment of Constantinople, but lavish donations and impressive constructions were not just a material token of imperial care for the city. Valens wanted his name to be intimately connected to the city founded by Constantine and then embellished by Constantius II and possibly Julian, so that the political value of Constantinople would transcend its dynastic origins. This is especially clear from the fact that he had Jovian—an ephemeral soldier emperor without any prestigious background—buried in the mausoleum of Constantine's family.¹⁶ In this way Valens associated himself with the Constantinian dynasty and set his governance within a topographic continuum framed by Constantinople as the sole locus of political legitimacy. The focusing of the Eastern Roman Empire on Constantinople gained pace in the second half of the fourth century, but it did not induce the emperors to settle down. Surprisingly, imperial mobility coexisted with political centralization, and Constantinople remained only a symbolic capital. In the same way as Rome during the Tetrarchy, the city of Constantine was uninhabited but not ignored, deserted but not neglected by the emperors.

II. Stabilizing and Centralizing Authority

The defeat of Adrianople in 378 and the destruction of Valens, along with a major part of his army, briefly disrupted the military situation in the Balkan Peninsula. But it neither threatened the political stability nor jeopardized the administrative continuity of the empire in the Balkans and the east.

16 Concerning the public works and buildings launched under Valens in order to promote his authority and family, see Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale*, 90; Mango, *Le développement urbain*, 40–41; Bassett, *The Urban Image*, 79; Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, 399; Mayer, *Rom ist dort*, 97–105 (in Antioch); J. Crow, "Water and Late Antique Constantinople," in *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. Grig and G. Kelly (Oxford, 2012), 116–35, esp. 118–21.

Within a few years Roman forces regained control over the frontiers and restored security in southeastern Europe. However, the unexpected designation of the Spaniard Theodosius I (379–395) as Valens's successor by Gratian, emperor in the West and Valens's nephew, ushered in a new era in late antique political history. At first sight Theodosius I followed the lead of Constantius II and Valens, conducting wars in the Balkan Peninsula against barbarian invaders and in Italy against Roman usurpers.¹⁷ However, a careful examination of the chronology and geography of Theodosius I's travels proves that he exercised a new way of exerting authority. As with his predecessors and successors, historical evidence mainly relies upon the laws transmitted, usually in abridged or fragmented versions, by two great legal compilations of late antiquity: the Theodosian and Justinianic codes.¹⁸ Even though these laws do not necessarily represent the emperors' day-to-day activities, they nevertheless constitute the primary source of information for reconstituting the geography and chronology of their travels. Constantinople served as a logical hub since the city stood exactly between the frontiers of the Danube and Euphrates rivers. For unknown reasons—perhaps because the Theodosian Code was compiled and promulgated under Theodosius I's grandson Theodosius II just thirty-three years after his death—Theodosius I's legal production has been better preserved than the decrees enacted by Constantius II and Valens. The extant records, while scant, enable us to gain a better insight into Theodosius I's journeys.¹⁹

17 Many biographies and studies have been dedicated to this famous, albeit controversial, emperor. I mention only some of them in chronological order: A. Lippold, "Theodosius I.," in *RE, Suppl.* 13 (1973): 837–961 (extremely detailed overview); J. Ernesti, *Princeps christianus und Kaiser aller Römer: Theodosius der Große im Lichte zeitgenössischer Quellen* (Paderborn, 1998) (with a special attention to religious affairs); S. Williams and G. Friell, *Theodosius: The Empire at Bay*, 2nd ed. (London, 1998) (brief and general introduction); H. Leppin, *Theodosius der Große: Auf dem Weg zum christlichen Imperium* (Darmstadt, 2003) (informative overview); R. M. Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy from Julian to Theodosius* (Chapel Hill, 2006) (focused on politics and diplomacy); P. Maraval, *Théodose le Grand: Le pouvoir et la foi* (Paris, 2009) (another recent overview).

18 Seeck, *Regesten*, 251–84; Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale*, 84–85.

19 On both compilations, among countless references see particularly G. Archi, *Teodosio II e la sua codificazione* (Naples, 1976);

Compared to his immediate predecessors, Theodosius I planned his moves within a limited area. He never crossed Asia Minor, nor did he pay a single visit to Syria or Mesopotamia. Moreover, from Valens in 378 to Heraclius in 627, none of the emperors traveled in the Levant. If we consider the geographical and chronological frame of Theodosius I's laws, personal authority seems to have been directly exerted over two regions: the southeastern Balkans and northern Italy. Even though laws were obviously preserved in both codes according to their juridical value and not their place and date of enactment, there is an imbalance in both quantitative and chronological terms. Of about 335 laws attributed to Theodosius I and precisely located, 280 were issued in the Balkans (including Constantinople) and 55 in Italy. During a reign that lasted 192 months, the emperor spent 154 months in the Balkans and 38 in Italy (fig. 1). Theodosius I clearly differs from any previous emperor by circumscribing his sphere of personal activity to the southeastern part of the Balkans. His apparent avoidance of Italy and to a larger extent of the Roman West can be explained by the permanent presence of an emperor in charge of this area. Gratian (375–383) and Valentinian II (375–392) were emperors in the West, whereas Theodosius I ruled the eastern half of the Roman Empire. He dwelt twice in Italy, first in 388–391 and then in 394–395. Both stays were necessitated by exceptional circumstances—first restoring Valentinian II's authority against a local competitor and

then eliminating the regime set up by a new usurper. Likewise progress in the Balkan Peninsula, above all in Moesia, Thrace, and Macedonia, was motivated by military emergencies, particularly Gothic threats.²⁰ Theodosius I's range of action was astonishingly limited insofar as imperial authority was not challenged in the West and peace was maintained with German tribes alongside the Danube. Whilst immediate predecessors were always on the move, and even though in his time frontiers were defended and inner security was ensured, Theodosius I moved away from military borders and focused his travels on Constantinople and its surrounding area, particularly the northern shore of the Propontis.

These brief, regular progresses in the Constantinopolitan region broke with the tradition of imperial mobility and encouraged a sedentary government intended to become a political model for Theodosius I's successors. The cumulative duration of his sojourns in Constantinople is longer than that of any previous emperor. In 382, 383, 385, 386, 392, and 393, preserved laws prove that Theodosius I stayed almost permanently in the city. The emperor increased its political and symbolic importance by erecting religious buildings, inaugurating devout processions, accumulating precious relics, and celebrating imperial events.²¹ However several lacunae in the legal sources represent chronological gaps of fifteen to thirty days, not enough time for a trip beyond the Propontis coast or to eastern Thrace. Sometimes laws attest imperial stays in the Propontic cities Selymbria (July 383) and Heraclea (June–July 384) and in Thracian Beroe (August 384).²² Theodosius I's sojourn in Beroe is especially important since it overturns the traditional chronology that

J. Harries, "Introduction: The Background to the Code," in *The Theodosian Code: Studies in the Imperial Law of Late Antiquity*, ed. J. Harries and I. N. Wood (London, 1993; repr. Bristol, 2014), 1–17; T. Honoré, *Law in the Crisis of Empire, 379–455 AD: The Theodosian Dynasty and Its Quaestors with a Palingenesia of Laws of the Dynasty* (Oxford, 1998); J. Matthews, *Laying Down the Law: A Study of the Theodosian Code* (New Haven and London, 2000); D. Schlinkert, "Between Emperor, Court, and Senatorial Order: The Codification of the Codex Theodosianus," *AncSoc* 32 (2002): 283–94; R. Delmaire, *Lois religieuses des empereurs romains de Constantin à Théodose II (312–438)*, vol. 1, *Code Théodosien livre XVI*, Sources chrétiennes 497 (Paris, 2005), 13–35; H. Leppin, "Die Gesetzgebung Iustinians: Der Kaiser und sein Recht," in *Erinnerungsorte der Antike: Die römische Welt*, ed. K.-J. Hölkeskamp and E. Stein-Hölkeskamp (Munich, 2006), 457–66; and more recently S. Corcoran, "The *Nouus codex* and the *Codex repetitae praelectionis*: Justinian and His Codes," in *Figures d'empire, fragments de mémoire. Pouvoirs et identités dans le monde romain impérial (III^e s. av. n. à VI^e s. de n. è.)*, ed. S. Benoist, A. Daguét-Gagey, and C. Hoët Van Cauwenberghe (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2011), 425–44, esp. 426–28.

20 On this turbulent period, see the recent study of A. Cedilnik, "Der Krieg des Theodosius gegen die Goten (379–382)," *Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft* 12 (2009): 45–97.

21 E. J. Watts, *The Final Pagan Generation* (Oakland, 2015), 173–78; B. Croke, "Reinventing Constantinople: Theodosius I's Imprint on the Imperial City," in *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians: Later Roman History and Culture, 284–450 CE*, ed. S. McGill, C. Sogno, and E. Watts (Cambridge, 2010), 241–64.

22 Selymbria: *CTh* 12.1.103 (27 July 383); Heraclea on the Propontis: *CTh* 6.30.7 = *CJ* 12.23.7 (10 June 384); *CTh* 12.1.106 (8 July 384); *CTh* 10.20.11 = *CJ* 11.8.8 (24 July 384); *CTh* 15.9.1 = *CJ* 1.16.1 (25 July 384); Beroe: *CTh* 12.1.107 (31 August 384; localization emended).

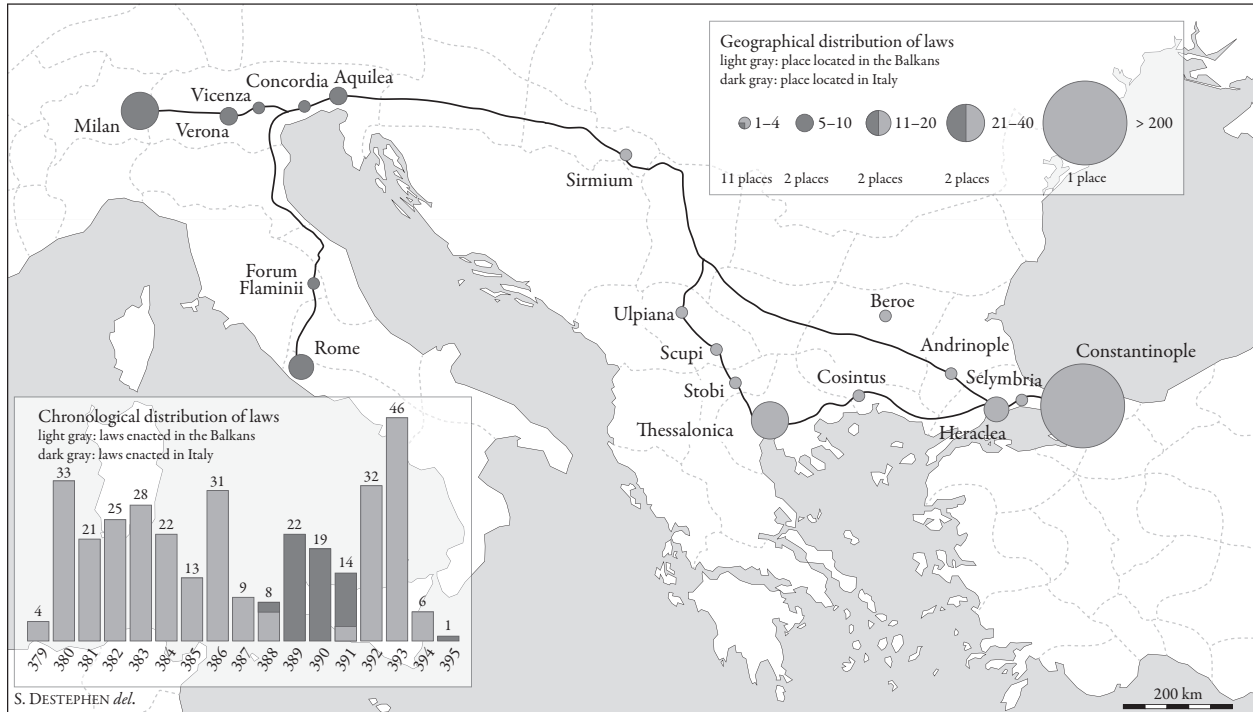


Fig. 1. Map showing cities in which laws were enacted by Theodosius I. Map by the author.

dated a trip to Verona in Italy at the same moment.²³ It is difficult to establish general rules supported by the evidence of a few laws, but from Theodosius I's rule onwards imperial authority became settled in Constantinople to an unprecedented degree. We have to go back to the period prior to the third-century crisis (and recovery) to find emperors who continuously stayed in the same place for several consecutive years. If we leave aside the Theodosian military expeditions in Italy and the central Balkans, imperial mobility was limited to Constantinople and the coastal hinterland. It is noteworthy that the sojourns, which took place outside the capital, were always scheduled in summer according to the relevant laws. In the case of every late Roman emperor prior to Theodosius I, spring and summer were dedicated to moves and military activities,

whereas fall and winter were routinely devoted to rest and preparation of the next campaigns.²⁴ This imperial "seasonality"²⁵ was determined by natural constraints, but it took on a new form with Theodosius I. Henceforth the emperor did not leave the city to carry out military tasks in summer, and imperial stays in coastal cities assumed a peaceful character.

Spending summer on the Propontic coast was not a vacation for the emperor and his retinue. Quite a few laws issued by Theodosius I and transmitted to the relevant departments of his government attest that

23 On the controversial stay in Beroe, see J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, AD 364–425* (Oxford, 1975; repr. 1998), 178, n. 2; D. Vera, "I rapporti fra Magno Massimo, Teodosio e Valentiniano II nel 383–384," *Athenaeum* 53 (1975): 267–301, esp. 274–75 and n. 26; F. Paschoud, *Zosime, Histoire nouvelle*, vol. 2, part 2, *Livre IV* (Paris, 1979; repr. 2003), 422, n. 175; Leppin, *Theodosius der Große*, 96; Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy*, 202; Maraval, *Théodose le Grand*, 155–57.

24 Traditionally the ideal Roman statesman alternated civil duties with military activities, as most leaders did in the late Roman Republic and early Roman Empire according to the survey offered by H. Plöger, *Studien zum literarischen Feldherrnporträt römischer Autoren des 1. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Kiel, 1976), 24–25, 49–51, 87–94, 146–53, and 216–19. As it had become a cliché, the same idea was also illustrated in late antiquity, particularly in Theodosius I's eulogy probably delivered at Rome in 389 by senator Pacatus, and handed down by the collection of the *Panegyrici Latini*, XII, 22, 1.

25 This neologism has been borrowed from F. Tinnefeld, "Saisonales Zeremoniell und Brauchtum in Byzanz," in *Rhythmus und Saisonalität: Kongressakten des 5. Symposiums des Mediävistenverbandes in Göttingen 1993*, ed. P. Dilg, G. Keil, and D.-R. Moser (Sigmaringen, 1995), 135–41.

the late Roman administrative machinery continued to work as usual and followed the emperor on progress, even though his journeys led him only a short distance away from the capital.²⁶ Because the emperor made long and frequent stays in Constantinople, he felt the need to take advantage of the summer to leave the capital, though he remained in close proximity to it. Even when he was settled in the capital, Theodosius I was not an immobile ruler—the palace of Constantinople did not turn into a Forbidden City on the Bosphorus. The emperor continued to be active, visible, and mobile. But he planned his travels within a limited radius from Constantinople. A few cities on the Propontis and in eastern Thrace were regarded as periodic dwellings, and a number of Balkan and Italian cities received more occasional visits. A parallel can easily be drawn between the partial settling down of Theodosius I in the region of Constantinople and his circulation pattern in Italy once military operations had been completed. In 389 and 390, when he took up residence in Italy after having restored Valentinian II's authority and strengthened his grip over the whole peninsula, the emperor lived mostly in Milan. As the main seat of imperial power in Italy from the late third century onwards,²⁷ Milan kept Theodosius I within its walls in the bad season and directed his movements in the good season. Therefore the visits the emperor paid to Rome and Verona represented only stages during a round trip from Milan.²⁸ The chronology of Theodosius I's movements in Italy, although poorly documented, reflects

a seasonal rhythm and a political space, similar to his trips in the Balkans. This involved the continuing predominance of a single city ranked as a capital, frequent summer journeys, and regular return to the capital before winter. In Italy, as in the Balkans, imperial circulation manifested a political choice for settling the ruler and his administration by alternating systemic immobility with brief travels.²⁹

The similarities between Theodosius's Italian and Balkan sojourns suggests a durational limit for these journeys. It is obvious that Milan was not a replacement capital and only a temporary residence, whereas Constantinople was a permanent capital and residence. Consequently the proliferation of Greek sources mentioning Constantinople as a New Rome under Theodosius I is to be expected.³⁰ With his constant presence on the Bosphorus and Propontis, the emperor completed the focusing of the Eastern Roman Empire on Constantinople and promoted the city to the rank of the second church of Christendom and eternal resting place for the deceased emperors and empresses of the previous ruling families. Many members of the Constantinian, Valentinian, and Theodosian dynasties were gathered in Constantinople in the multidynastic mausoleum of the Holy Apostles.³¹ The physical concentration of imperial corpses, clustered together in the same fictitious succession, exemplifies the political

26 Chronology of Theodosius I's sojourns in and close to Constantinople, despite minor corrections and precisions, has been firmly established by Seeck, *Regesten* (see n. 3 above), 255–73 and 279–83.

27 See particularly several publications of L. Cracco Ruggini, "Milano nella circolazione monetaria del Tardo Impero: Esigenze politiche e risposte socioeconomiche," in *La zecca di Milano: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studio, Milano 9–14 Maggio 1983*, ed. G. Gorini (Milan, 1984), 13–58, esp. 14–19 and 32–33 (I thank Giovanni Gorini for sending this valuable and rare publication); eadem, "Milano da 'metropoli' degli Insubri a capitale d'impero: Una vicenda di mille anni," in *Milano capitale dell'impero romano, 286–402 d. C. Album storico archeologico: Mostra, Milano, Palazzo reale, 24 gennaio–22 aprile 1990* (Milan, 1990), 17–23, esp. 18–19; eadem, "Nascita e morte di una capitale," *Quaderni Catanesi di Studi Classici e Medievali* 2 (1990): 5–51, esp. 12–25. For the previous period see eadem, "Milano nei primi tre secoli dell'impero: Potenzialità e sviluppi," in *Milano in età imperiale, I–III secolo: Atti del convegno di studi, 7 novembre 1992, Milano* (Milan, 1996), 11–25.

28 Seeck, *Regesten*, 275–79.

29 Concerning the first Italian stay of Theodosius I, see D. Vera, "Le statue del senato di Roma in onore di Fl. Teodosio e l'equilibrio di poteri imperiali in età teodosiana," *Athenaeum* 57 (1979): 381–403, esp. 398–400; Lippold, "Theodosius I," 879–93; Leppin, *Theodosius der Große*, 96; Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy*, 202; Maraval, *Théodose le Grand*, 215–40.

30 A brief overview is given by E. Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae* (Munich, 1968), 57–61. After exploring the rhetorical and political notions of capital city and Second Rome in the orations of Themistius, Himerius, and Libanius, the author analyses the concept of New Rome that Gregory of Nazianzus had developed in his works.

31 G. Downey, "The Builder of the Original Church of the Apostles at Constantinople: A Contribution to the Criticism of the *Vita Constantini* Attributed to Eusebius," *DOP* 6 (1951): 51–80; R. Janin, *Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat œcuménique*, vol. 3, *Les églises et les monastères*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1969), 42–44; C. Mango, "Constantine's Mausoleum and the Translation of Relics," *BZ* 83 (1990): 51–61; J.-P. Sodini, "Rites funéraires et tombeaux impériaux à Byzance," in *La mort du souverain entre Antiquité et haut Moyen Âge*, ed. B. Boissavit-Camus, F. Chausson, and H. Inglebert (Paris, 2003), 167–82; M. J. Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2009), 120–25.

concentration that Theodosius I achieved in favor of the new capital.³² Not only was the old Rome excluded from imperial travels in late antiquity but it was also decapitated by the promotion of Constantinople, whose dynastic influence spread throughout the empire. The city's attractiveness was both cause and result of the settling down of imperial authority under Theodosius I. Thanks to the lavish donations and privileges granted by Constantius II and Valens, Constantinople possessed public institutions and monuments similar to Rome, and the permanent presence of the emperor and his family allowed it to overshadow any potential rival, even Rome. In other words, the immobility and heredity of Theodosius I's government focused power on a single residence and family, and his new capital became the permanent and exclusive stage from which to exert legitimate authority.³³

III. Settling Down and Dissociating Authority

Theodosius I prematurely passed away in Milan in January 395, and the circumstances surrounding his death highlight the general evolution of politics in late antiquity. Although five previous emperors had died while traveling (Constantine in 337, Constantius II in 361, Julian in 363, Jovian in 364, and finally Valens in 378), Theodosius I was the first Roman ruler since Nerva in 98 to die of natural causes in a capital city. His death is proof of political stabilization and consolidation. Had death not seized him unexpectedly in Milan, it is very likely that Theodosius I would have died in Constantinople, the anchor of his power and family. Not only was he the first late Roman emperor to die in a capital (with the exception of Maxentius, defeated and killed in 312), but Theodosius I was also the last eastern Roman emperor to die outside of

Constantinople until Constans II's assassination in 668 in Sicilian Syracuse. His son Arcadius (395–408) and grandson Theodosius II (408–450), Theodosius I's immediate successors, carried on the ancestral policy of concentrating and establishing imperial authority within Constantinople.³⁴

Theodosius I never got away from the European coast of the Propontis except in cases of military emergency in the Balkans or Italy. In the same way, Arcadius and Theodosius II stayed almost continuously in Constantinople, according to the chronological and geographical distribution of the documentary and literary sources.³⁵ At first sight Theodosius I's descendants pursued the settling down and centralizing process in two opposite directions. On one hand they abandoned the effective conduct of war, assigning this responsibility to generals and consequently avoiding long-distance campaigning; on the other hand, once released from military duty, they perpetuated their ancestor's tradition of leisure travel, but on a larger scale. Arcadius and Theodosius II left Constantinople on several occasions and headed to the Propontis shoreline (Selymbria, Heraclea, Thracian Aphrodisias, Therallum)³⁶ and some cities of western Asia Minor (Nicomedia, Nicaea, Mnizus, Ancyra, Cyzicus, Bithynian Apamea),³⁷ a region Theodosius I

32 See also P. Grierson, "The Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors (337–1042)," *DOP* 16 (1962): 3–63, esp. 23–26; M. Johnson, "On the Burial Places of the Theodosian Dynasty," *Byzantion* 61 (1991): 330–39; Sadini, "Rites funéraires," 175–76; D. Feissel, "Les tombeaux des premiers empereurs byzantins au témoignage des chroniques médiévales, XII^e–XIII^e siècle," *Bulletin de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France* 2011: 117–20.

33 A few words should be said on John the Lydian, who claimed in his treaty *On Magistracies*, 2.11.4, that Theodosius I barred his sons from leading campaigns on the ground that they were indolent! As the information is repeated elsewhere (3.41.3) with reference to Arcadius, it is hard to regard it as reliable.

34 On both emperors, besides the old monograph of A. Güldenpenning, *Geschichte des oströmischen Reiches unter den Kaisern Arcadius und Theodosius II.* (Halle, 1885), see K. G. Holum, *Theodosian Emperors: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982); J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford, 1992); A. Cameron and J. Long, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (Berkeley, 1993); C. Kelly, ed., *Theodosius II: Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2013).

35 Seeck, *Regesten*, 285–387.

36 Selymbria (Eudoxiopolis): *CTh* 12.1.182 (26 August 416); *CJ* 1.46.2 (27 August 416); *CTh* 9.40.23 = *CJ* 9.47.24 (30 August 416); *CJ* 1.2.4; *CJ* 4.63.5 (21 August 420, consulates emended); *CTh* 16.5.61 (8 August 423); *CTh* 12.3.2 (9 August 423); Heraclea on Propontis: *CTh* 11.28.11 (9 September 416); Theodosius II, *Novellae*, XXIII, praef. (spring 443); Aphrodisias of Thrace: Theodosius II, *Novellae*, XXIII (22 May 443); Therallum: *ACO*, II, 1.1.71 (15 May 449). The Heraclea and Aphrodisias mentioned in Theodosius II's *Novella* are not those located in Asia Minor, as supposed by C. Roueché, "Theodosius II, the Cities, and the Date of the *Church History* of Sozomen," *JTS* 37 (1986): 130–32, but the Thracian ones. See Destephen, *Le voyage impérial*, 102–4.

37 Nicomedia: *CTh* 6.4.32 (26 June 397; suscription lacunose); *CJ* 11.62.9 (6 July 398); *CTh* 12.12.16 (1 June 426); *CTh* 8.7.21 = *CJ*

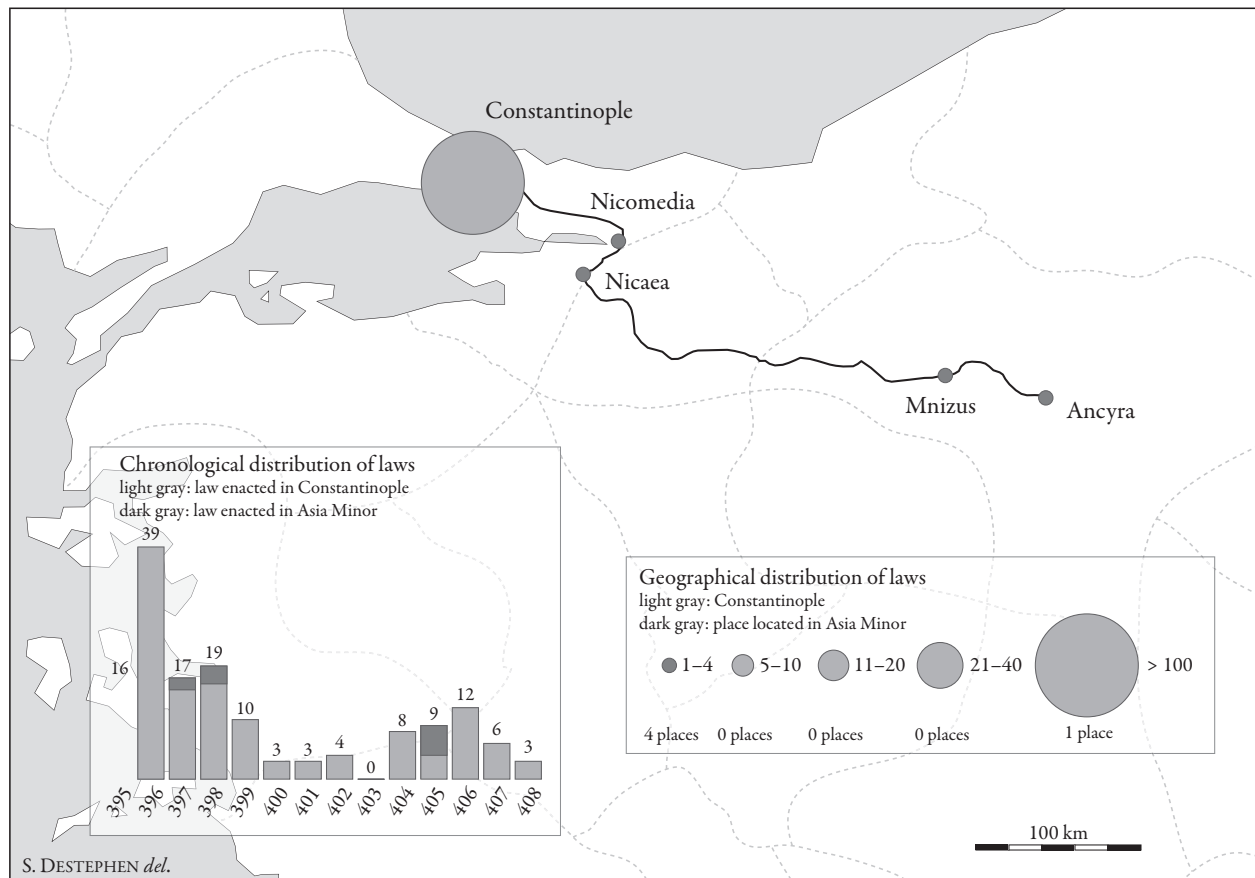


Fig. 2. Map showing cities in which laws were enacted by Arcadius. Map by the author.

never visited. His successors' increasing mobility followed the same periodicity, pattern, performance, and perspective, but on a slightly wider area. Arcadius and Theodosius II's travels took place in summer, were peaceful, began and ended in Constantinople, and were meant to distract the emperor without interrupting the administrative routine.

However, a closer look at the legal documentation reveals an increasing concentration of political activity

in Constantinople under Arcadius and Theodosius II. Among Theodosius I's preserved laws that can be assigned to specific locations, about two-thirds were enacted in the capital. If we exclude the laws issued by Theodosius I from his time in Italy, the share of Constantinople reaches almost 80 percent of the legal production (and therefore of the emperor's administrative, fiscal, and judicial activity). In other words, Constantinople monopolized the major part of the emperor's ordinary activity when he stayed within the capital region encompassing the Bosphorus and the southeastern Balkans. Despite trips to eastern Thrace and western Asia Minor, Arcadius and Theodosius II continued the political centralization of power in the first half of the fifth century. Out of a total of about 375 preserved and localized laws, almost 95 percent were issued in the capital (figs. 2 and 3). Of course we must assume that some of both emperors' legislation has been lost and that the remnants of their legal

12.49.7 = *CJ* 12.59.6 (22 June 426); *CTh* 8.7.22; *CTh* 8.7.23 = *CJ* 11.8.14 (1 July 426); Nicaea: *CTh* 8.1.14 = *CJ* 12.49.6 (12 July 398; dating corrected); *CJ* 5.4.19 (11 June 405); *CTh* 2.33.4 (12 June 405); Mnizus: *CTh* 9.40.16 = *CJ* 1.4.6; *CTh* 9.45.3 = *CJ* 1.3.12; *CTh* 11.30.57 = *CJ* 7.62.9; *CTh* 16.2.33 = *CJ* 1.3.11; *CJ* 1.4.7 (27 June 398; localization corrected); Ancyra: *CTh* 6.3.4; *CTh* 9.14.3 = *CJ* 9.8.5 (4 September 397); *CTh* 7.10.1 (10 July 405); *CTh* 1.34.1 (23 July 405); *CTh* 6.30.18 = *CJ* 12.23.9 (12 August 405); Cyzicus: Marcellinus Comes, a. 436; Apamea: *CTh* 11.1.37; *CTh*, 11.5.4 = *CJ* 10.17.2 (28 August 438).

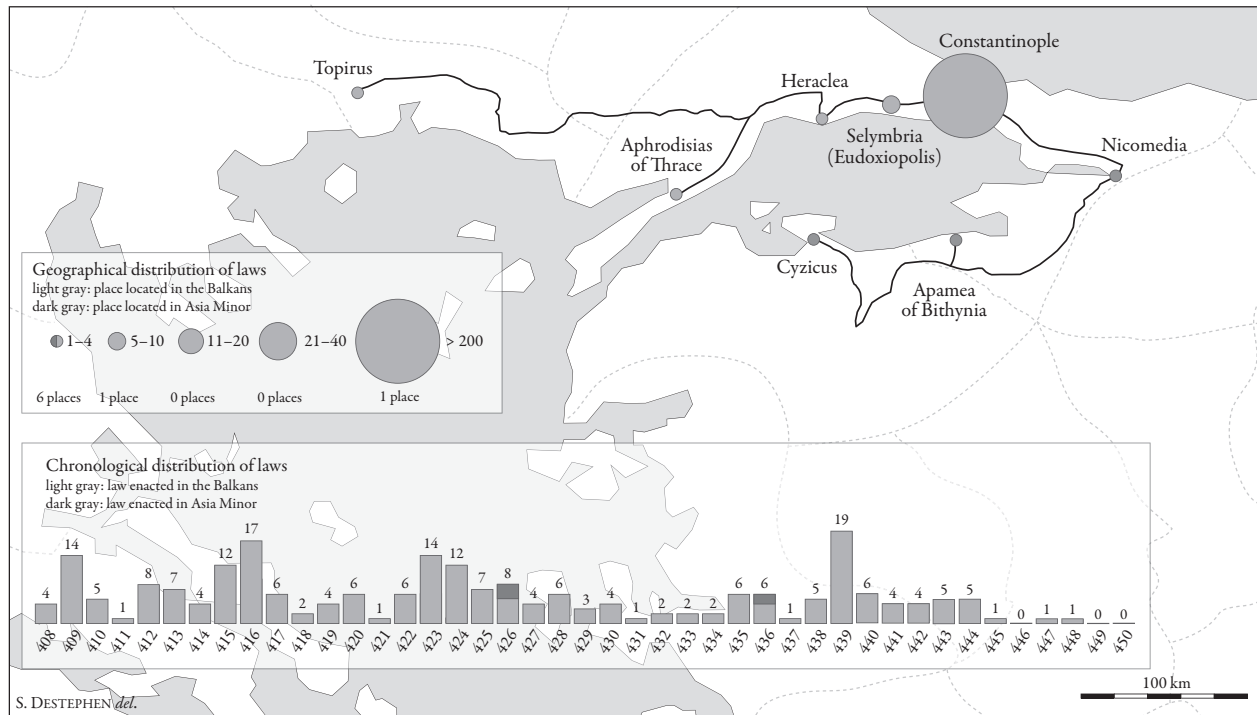


Fig. 3. Map showing cities in which laws were enacted by Theodosius II. Map by the author.

documentation provide only a fragmentary view of imperial daily life. Yet we must acknowledge that the travels of Arcadius and Theodosius II took place mostly when legislative activity slowed down, or at least that most legislation was done in the capital. While both emperors tended to move less than Theodosius I, it is noteworthy that they, like Theodosius I, focused their movement on Constantinople. But they also integrated new destinations on the southern shoreline of the Propontis, whereas Theodosius I always stayed on the northern coast. Instead of distributing legal production among several places, the multiplication of seasonal residences was paradoxically contemporaneous with an increasing concentration of administrative activity. In such conditions, we can assume that a change occurred in imperial travel itself: it was no longer a government on the move but a temporary absence of the emperor without any consequence for the administrative machinery in Constantinople. Far from indicating renewed political nomadism, which characterized most of the third- and the fourth-century emperors, Arcadius and Theodosius II's summer trips underline the civilian, almost peaceful nature of these

imperial travels and the institutional monopoly established in favor of Constantinople.

The depoliticization of imperial travel was combined with a demilitarization of the emperorship itself.³⁸ After Theodosius I's death in 395, no subsequent emperor conducted military operations until Maurice (582–602) and, above all, Heraclius (610–641). That probably explains why Theodosius II implemented a new form of imperial travel: pilgrimage.³⁹ While his predecessors had performed passing devotion to

38 It did not mean that the chain of command was loosened and officers in charge of the Roman army in the East became more independent from decisions made in the capital, as has been proposed by A. D. Lee, "Theodosius II and His Generals," in *Theodosius II: Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity*, ed. C. Kelly (Cambridge, 2013), 90–108. A parallel can be drawn between Constantius II's effort to keep control and balance among higher officers in the fourth century and Theodosius II's policy in the fifth, even though modern scholarship did not hold Theodosius II in high esteem until recently. See R. C. Blockley, "Constantius II and His Generals," in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, ed. C. Deroux (Brussels, 1980), 2: 467–86.

39 On this subject, see S. Destephen, "Le Prince chrétien en pèlerinage," in *Le Prince chrétien de Constantin aux royautés barbares*

provincial shrines, Theodosius II was demonstratively and actively pious. His religious displays created a new tradition of legitimizing authority through pilgrimage, and his travels mapped official moves according to religious geography. Christian sources, especially hagiographical ones, highlight imperial devotional trips, but legal documentation hardly mentions them, even though Roman law underwent the same global process of Christianization as the rest of the Roman Empire under Theodosius II. A novel mentions an imperial trip in 443 to the northern shore of the Propontis on account of a personal prayer. The official visit became an extensive procession, and the administrative inspection was combined with a votive excursion:

Emperors Theodosius and Valentinian Augustuses to Apollonius, Praetorian Prefect. Since the highest zeal and with Our whole strength We strive that the municipalities which are subject to Our sway shall live in perpetual felicity, We consider that nothing is so unjust and so inconsistent with Our times as that, when it is Our will that the municipalities should be aided by extraneous support, We should allow them to be denuded and despoiled of their own resources. Wherefore, when for the sake of a vow, We were making a passage through the municipality of Heraclea, We were moved to great compassion by the petitions of the citizens of the aforesaid municipality, who requested that care should be given by Our provisions to their walls as their aqueduct, and also their other public works, on the ground that they had been neglected for a long time. Since often a remedy requested by one municipality or one man customarily occasions a general rule for correction of wrong, We agree to their requests, and We consider that Our generosity must be extended to all provinces. For vows are especially effective at a time when wise provision is thereby made for the condition of the State, which is the cause of vows.⁴⁰

(IV^c–VIII^c siècle), ed. S. Destephen, B. Dumézil, and H. Inglebert (Paris, 2018), 269–313, esp. 293–301.

40 Clyde Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions: A Translation with Commentary, Glossary and Bibliography* (Princeton, NJ, 1952); Theodosius II, *Novellae*, XXIII,

The further sacralization of imperial authority under the Theodosians compensated for the effective demilitarization of the emperor. Pilgrimages restored the official value of imperial travels, which had lost most of their political dimension.

The Christianization of the imperial progress was, indeed, another effect of the depoliticization of the emperors' travels. Notwithstanding this evolution, the ruler's *adventus* continued to be viewed as exceptional, a sort of imperial epiphany celebrated according to a ritual established in the Roman Empire and still in use in the mid-sixth century, as attested by Peter the Patrician, Justinian's master of offices.⁴¹ The great entry had become an imperial ceremony fossilized by the conservative tradition of the palatine department responsible for planning such a public event. Central administration, settled in Constantinople, also influenced the notion of imperial travel itself. Due to an erratic and uneven transmission of narrative and legal

praef.: "Imp[eratores] Theod[osius] et Valent[inianus] A[ugusti] Apollonio p[raefecto] p[raetori]o. Cum summo studio totisque viribus enitatur civitates ditioni nostrae subiectas in perpetua felicitate versari, nihil tam iniquum esse neque a nostris temporibus dissentiens arbitramur, quam si eas adventiciis quidem subsidiis adiuvari velimus, propriis vero facultatibus nudari spoliarique patiamur. Quapropter cum voti causa per Heracleotanam civitatem transitum faceremus, petitionibus civium eiusdem maxima sumus commiseratione conmoti, qui tam murorum suorum quam aquaeductus nec non etiam aliorum operum publicorum, utpote longo tempore neglectorum, curam fieri oportere nostris provisionibus flagitarunt. Et quoniam saepe ab una civitate vel homine postulatum remedium generalem solet formam correctionis adferre, horum desideriis adnuentes liberalitatem nostram ad omnes provincias ducimus propagandam. Tunc enim maxime vota proficiunt, cum statui rei publicae, quae causa votorum est, consulatur."

41 The text describes Justinian's triumphal entry in Constantinople in 559 after having dealt with the nomadic Kutrigurs, and the solemn festivities organized for greeting the emperor on his way back from Bithynia or Asia. Normally sojourns in Selymbria, Heraclea, or beyond did not deserve such a pompous (and expensive) reception. See J. Haldon, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions* (Vienna, 1990), 138. On the *adventus*, see S. G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981); P. Dufraigne, *Adventus Augusti, adventus Christi: Recherche sur l'exploitation idéologique et littéraire d'un cérémonial dans l'antiquité tardive* (Paris, 1994); J. Lehn, *Adventus principis: Untersuchungen zu Sinngehalt und Zeremoniell der Kaiserankunft in den Städten des Imperium Romanum* (Frankfurt and New York, 1997); F.A. Bauer, *Stadt, Platz und Denkmal in der Spätantike: Untersuchungen zur Ausstattung des öffentlichen Raums in den spätantiken Städten Rom, Konstantinopel und Ephesos* (Mainz, 1996), 380–83.

sources, major departments and higher civil servants (*quaestors*, financial *comites*, masters of offices) are better known from Theodosius I onwards. At the same time imperial mobility was reduced, official positions were significantly increased as imperial authority settled down in Constantinople and the later Roman court became more bureaucratic.⁴² As they became less mobile, the emperors became less visible in the provinces. But they knew that physical presence traditionally enforced loyalty. Instead of visiting provincial elites, emperors lured them to the capital with a brilliant and sophisticated court society. The unwieldy and costly court of Constantinople accentuated the centralization of authority and limited imperial mobility as well. Fully aware of the political risk of being geographically and socially isolated, the Theodosian emperors increasingly integrated the provincial ruling class and made it dependent on the benefits of countless titles and official positions.

The Theodosian and Justinianic codes in some instances show the growth of administrative departments set up to be in close proximity to the emperors, such as the department of justice or the service of personal protection. In addition to a growing staff were the people who held a supernumerary office and eagerly waited for a colleague's promotion or retirement to be able to fulfill an effective function within the central administration or the imperial court. Since high officials also held court dignities, these positions provided access to the palace for major imperial festivals and ceremonies.⁴³ Since participating in court life required a scrupulous respect for the official

hierarchy structuring the emperor's entourage, it is more than likely that imperial travels involved the selection of a retinue. Unfortunately, the sources do not provide any guidance for the first half of the fifth century, but we may estimate that Arcadius and Theodosius II chose their fellow travelers based on proximity, status, and utility. However we should not assume that a Theodosian emperor on progress moved with the whole central administration. The bureaucracy was constantly expanding, even though the emperor remained the head of state and, consequently, the ultimate legislator and supreme judge.

After Theodosius II's demise in 450, his successors' travels were further reduced to the Bosphorus area, although on some rare occasions in the fifth and sixth centuries emperors ventured to Thrace, Bithynia, or Galatia, as Justinian did in 559 and 563.⁴⁴ The expansion of the court hampered the emperors' mobility and, paradoxically, the subjection of the elites made the emperors more dependent on their court. As suburban residences multiplied from the fifth century onwards, the emperors stayed away more and remained relatively independent from the capital. A dozen palaces built around the Bosphorus allowed them to travel locally without interrupting the administrative continuity of Constantinople, home to a burdensome court and a turbulent crowd.⁴⁵ The expanding court probably paralleled the demographic growth of the capital, and both must have reached their peak under Justinian,

42 On central administration, see general overviews by A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey* (Oxford, 1964; repr. Baltimore, 1992), 1:366–410; R. Delmaire, *Les institutions du Bas-Empire romain de Constantin à Justinien: Les institutions civiles palatines* (Paris, 1995), *passim*; A. Demandt, *Geschichte der Spätantike: Das Römische Reich von Diocletian bis Justinian 284–565 n. Chr.*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 2007; repr. 2008), 203–17; D. Feissel, “L'empereur et l'administration impériale,” in *Le monde byzantin*, vol. 1, *L'Empire romain d'Orient (330–641)*, ed. C. Morisson (Paris, 2004), 79–110, esp. 92–102; and the innovative study of C. Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2006), 186–92.

43 The main figures are listed and commented by K. L. Noethlich, “Hofbeamter,” in *RAC* 15 (1991): 1111–58, esp. 1138, 1143, 1151, and 1153; idem, “Strukturen und Funktionen des spätantiken Kaiserhofes,” in *Comitatus: Beiträge zur Erforschung des spätantiken Kaiserhofes*, ed. A. Winterling (Berlin, 1998), 13–49, esp. 27–28 and n. 81.

44 For the period after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, see T. Lounghis, V. Blysidou, and S. Lampakes, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 476 bis 565* (Nicosia, 2005); and F. Dölger, A. E. Müller, J. Preiser-Kapeller, and A. Riehle, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565–1453*, vol. 1, part 1, *Regesten von 565–867*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 2009), 1–58.

45 R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique* (Paris, 1964), 138–53; I. Baldini Lippolis, “Case e palazzi a Costantinopoli,” *CCAB* 41 (1994): 279–311, esp. 305–7; H. Hellenkemper, “Anatolische Riviera: Byzantinische Kaiserpalästen in Bithynien,” in *Neue Funde und Forschungen in Bithynien: Friedrich Karl Dörner zum 100. Geburtstag gewidmet*, ed. E. Winter and K. Zimmermann (Bonn, 2013), 61–81; idem, “Politische Orte? Kaiserliche Sommerpaläste in Konstantinopel,” in *The Emperor's House: Palaces from Augustus to the Age of Absolutism*, ed. M. Featherstone et al. (Berlin, 2015), 243–54, esp. 243–48; B. Ward-Perkins, “A Most Unusual Empire: Rome in the Fourth Century,” in *The City in the Classical and Post-Classical World: Changing Contexts of Power and Identity*, ed. C. Rapp and H. A. Drake (New York and Cambridge, 2014), 109–29.

before the outbreak of plague in 541 and 542.⁴⁶ A hint of the court's size is provided by the only official move of which we know the number of participants. The empress Theodora, probably in 529, traveled through Bithynia to make pious donations and take the waters of the hot spring of Pythia with retinue of a four thousand. Most modern scholars assume that the later Roman court numbered about six thousand.⁴⁷ The crowd surrounding Justinian's wife was big enough to catch the attention of authors and impact memory, and the presence of magistrates and chamberlains with Theodora during her impressive journey reveals the complexity of imperial travels. These journeys were simultaneously public and private, official and personal, administrative and curative, religious and touristic. In 571 Justin II, Justinian's nephew and successor, and his wife, Sophia, Theodora's

niece, made more or less the same trip to Bithynia as Theodora had forty-three years prior. The imperial couple took the waters at Pythia, but decided to stay in a monastery instead of at the nearby official residence built by Justinian.⁴⁸ The private and pious character of imperial travels had clearly superseded any previous military or administrative dimension. This deep change proves that the process of capitalizing Constantinople was complete and the city was fully able to compensate for the emperor's brief absences. Even though emperors continued to travel short distances, from this point on the Byzantine state was properly settled down.



The history of imperial travel in late antiquity is not linear, although precise transformations and structural evolutions are hard to trace. It is noteworthy that the common opinion regarding late imperial journeys is still influenced by the portraits of the emperors created by ancient and modern historiography and handed down from one generation of scholars to the next. Constantine's decreased mobility during his last years or Theodosius I's long stays in Constantinople are generally not viewed as signs of political weakness and personal incompetency, whereas Arcadius and Theodosius II's trips are frequently underestimated or ignored as they do not match the notions of impotence and incompetence which plague the memory of these emperors. Mobility is valued as a proof of dynamism, while minimal travel is associated with inertia. But in fact the reduced geography and seasonal chronology of Arcadius and Theodosius II's travels were quite similar to those of Constantine. The geographical limitation of imperial travels was not synonymous with territorial contraction or personal feebleness.

Due to the process of concentrating authority and elites in Constantinople, the emperors of the Roman East regarded long and expensive travels throughout the provinces as financially irrelevant and politically unnecessary. Later Roman emperors did not need to appear in person anymore. Constantine, Theodosius II, or Justinian could step out on the main roads, pay visits to several provinces, and remind

46 D. Stathakopoulos, "The Justinianic Plague Revisited," *BMGS* 24 (2000): 256–76; idem, *Famine and Pestilence in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Empire: A Systematic Survey of Subsistence Crises and Epidemics* (Aldershot, 2004), 110–54; idem, "Crime and Punishment: The Plague in the Byzantine Empire, 541–749," in *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541–750*, ed. L. K. Little (Cambridge, 2006), 99–118, esp. 99–102; H. Pottier, "L'empereur Justinien survivant à la peste bubonique (542)," *TM* 16 (2010): 685–91 on the apparition of buboes caused by the disease upon the emperor's neck as supposedly revealed by *folles* coined during the epidemic.

47 John Malalas, 18.25, in H. Thurn, *Iohannis Malalae Chronographia* (Berlin and New York, 2000), 368, l.49–52: Ἐν δὲ τῇ συμπληρώσει τῆς αὐτῆς ἰνδικτιῶνος ἐξώρμησεν ἡ αὐτὴ Αὐγούστα Θεοδώρα εἰς τὸ λεγόμενον Πύθιον μετὰ πατρικίων καὶ κουβικουλαρίων, οὕσα σὺν χιλιάσι τέτρασι ("At the end of this indiction the Augusta Theodora set out for the place known as Pythion with patricians and *cubicularii*, accompanied by 4,000 people. After giving generously to the churches in each place she returned to Constantinople"; E. M. Jeffreys, M. J. Jeffreys, and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of John Malalas* [Canberra, 1986]). Theophanes the Confessor, A.M. 6025, in C. de Boor, ed., *Theophanis Chronographia*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883), 186, l.8–12: Τοῦτω τῷ ἔτει Θεοδώρα, ἡ εὐσεβεστάτη αὐγούστα, ἐξῆλθεν εἰς τὰ θερμὰ τῶν Πυθίων θερμίσαι· καὶ συνεξήλθον αὐτῇ ὁ τε πατρικίος Μηνᾶς ὁ ἐπαρχος, καὶ ὁ πατρικίος Ἡλίας, ὁ κόμης τῶν λαργιτιῶνων, καὶ ἄλλοι πατρικιοὶ καὶ οἱ κουβικουλάριοι καὶ σατράπαι, χιλιάδες τέσσαρες· καὶ πολλὰ ἐχαρίσατο ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις καὶ πτωχείοις καὶ τοῖς μοναστηρίοις ("In this year, Theodora, the most pious Augusta, journeyed to the hot springs of Pythia to take the waters. She was accompanied by the patrician Menas [the prefect], the patrician Helias, who was *comes largitionum*, and other patricians, *cubicularii*, and satraps, a total of 4,000. She showed much liberality to the churches, poorhouses, and monasteries"; C. Mango and R. Scott, trans., *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813* [Oxford, 1997]).

48 John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.26–27 and 2.46; E. W. Brooks, *Iohannis Ephesini Historiae ecclesiasticae pars tertia*, (Louvain, 1935–1936).

their faithful subjects that they were the only source of authority and benefaction. But the deeper the process of political centralization went the rarer imperial journeys became. After the early fifth century, the emperors' disappearance from the provinces did not generate any serious criticism, uprising, or secession within the Eastern Roman Empire, since Constantinopolitan hegemony had become obvious to central and provincial elites alike. Henceforth the emperor was intimately bound to the capital. The

definitive and unchallenged residence of the emperors in Constantinople was a clear demonstration of personal authority and proved the efficacy of the later Roman state.

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